

The Future of Georgia's Rose Revolution

Washington, DC

17 January 2008

Sponsors

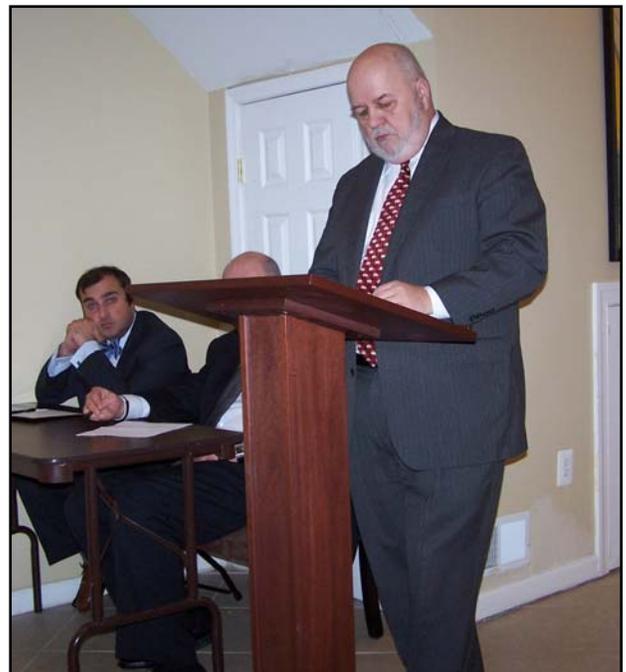
Center for Security and Science

Helms School of Government, Liberty University



This conference was an effort to bring together members of the academic, diplomatic, and governmental communities in a setting conducive to an open and candid exchange of views about recent developments in Georgia. The conference site was provided by the Washington Intern Student Housing at 239 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, working with the Helms School at Liberty University.

The main presentation was given by Ambassador Richard M. Miles who was appointed US Ambassador to Georgia in 2002 after completing a term as US Ambassador to Bulgaria. He was also US Ambassador to Azerbaijan from 1992 to 1993. Ambassador Miles discussed not only the recent Georgian elections but also the US role in the controversies in 2007 that led to the new Presidential elections in January, 2008. Miles expressed concern about negative perceptions of the American role during the crisis and the January elections. He was, in particular, concerned about a growing belief among many Georgians that the United States' unqualified commitment to the incumbent president had undermined the US commitment to democracy.





Deputy Chief of Mission, Malkhaz Mikeladze, served as a discussant on behalf of the Georgian Embassy. Mr. Mikeladze discussed the role of international monitors during the 5 January elections and their essentially favorable reports on the conduct of those elections. He explained the reasoning behind the early scheduling of the elections and President Saakashvili's decision to step down as president during the campaign. Mr. Mikeladze noted that more than 70 % of the population expressed support in the plebiscite for Georgia joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

DCM Mikeladze was joined by George Kaladze, Senior Counselor of the Embassy of Georgia. Mr. Kaladze discussed the issue of international acceptance of the plebiscite results. In responding to criticisms that the US was too eager to accept the outcome, Mr. Kaladze pointed out that the French government was the first to send congratulations to President Saakashvili on his re-election. He also observed that in spite of some opposition criticisms of the West, Georgian public opinion remains solidly pro-American.



The concluding remarks were offered by Ambassador Ceslav Ciobanu, former Moldovan Ambassador to the United States and Associate Professor of Economics at Virginia State University. Dr. Ciobanu compared Georgia's democratic progress with that of the Moldovan Republic and praised Georgia for its success in taking an important step in demonstrating how a democratic system can work to peacefully resolve disputes. Dr. Ciobanu's presentation is posted at the end of this report.



Above left: Early arrivals waiting for the conference to begin. **Above right:** Refreshments prepared for conference attendees. **Left:** Conference room. We would like to thank the Washington Intern Student Housing (WISH) staff for allowing us to use their meeting room for our conference as well as Tina Thorpe and Christi Corbin of the Helms School of Government for their assistance in preparing conference materials.



Above: Dr. Stephen Baskerville, a Political Science professor at Patrick Henry College, is shown with Dr. Thomas Houlahan, Director of CSS Military Assessment Program and a specialist on Pakistan. **Below:** Paul Vivian of Mt. Vernon, Virginia, who studied East European affairs at Indiana University, is shown with CSS staff member Reed Bowers.



Ambassador Miles, shown here with CSS Director and LU Professor Stephen Bowers, was born in Arkansas and grew up in Indiana. He is a graduate of Bakersfield College, the University of California at Berkeley, Indiana University, and the U.S. Army Russian Institute, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. He has received the State Department's Meritorious Honor Award, two Group Superior Honor Awards and a Presidential Meritorious Service Award.



THE FUTURE OF THE ROSE REVOLUTION

The Helms School of Government and The Center for Security and Science will host a conference on the developments in Georgia.

January 17, 2008 from 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Washington Intern Student Housing (WISH)
Conference Room
239 Massachusetts Avenue NE
Washington, DC

Primary Speaker Ambassador Richard Miles
Former US Ambassador to Georgia

Discussants **Maikhaz Mikeladze**
Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of Georgia

George Kaladze
Embassy of Georgia
Washington, DC

Closing Remarks Ambassador Ceslav Ciobanu
Former Moldovan Ambassador to the US



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We would like to thank the Embassy of Georgia at 2209 Massachusetts Avenue NW in Washington, DC (*pictured above*) for their assistance in planning and conducting our conference on “The Future of the Rose Revolution”.

The Future of the Rose Revolution: Concluding Remarks, by Ceslav Ciobanu

Conference on Developments in Georgia's Rose Revolution. Center for Security & Science, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2008

I would like to thank Dr. Stephen Bowers, Director of the Center for Security and Science (SCC), for preparing and moderating this conference. I would like to mention also very interesting and comprehensive analysis of the Georgia's evolutions, that Ambassador Richard Miles, former US Ambassador to Georgia, presented, as well as Presentations by Georgian diplomats, Malkhaz Mikeladze, DCM and George Kaladze.

The Conference is very important and just in time event, convoked by CSS shortly after presidential elections in Georgia. It is a good opportunity to rethink and reassess the achievements and shortcomings of Georgian transition to democracy and free market under the auspices of the Rose Revolution. This is important not only for Georgia, but for other countries in transition, like my native Moldova, which are facing similar problems and challenges, are making the same mistakes and errors, and, eventually will take right lessons from Georgian experience. This is important also for the United States, for its multimillion programs of assistance invested into democratic and prosperous future of these countries and therefore into stability and security of the region confronting the challenge of separatism and revenge of nostalgic forces.

In this respect I would like to focus my concluding remarks on a few, in my opinion, most important and controversial aspects of the Georgian Rose Revolution.

First, the vote in recent presidential elections could be considered not so a victory for Mikheil Saakashvili, but for Georgian democracy. In his recent interview with the Russian TV channel *Vesti Nedeli* he mentioned: "Georgia is a country of paradox. People can quarrel with each other and call each other whatever names in the morning and drink together at the same table in the evening"¹. I think that the Georgian President learnt the lesson how important is to fulfill democratic principles, to engage opposition in a constructive dialog, addressing the most pressing needs of the civil society: poverty, corruption, freedom of speech etc.

This could be a turning point for Georgia and a good precedent for other post-Soviet states still dominated by the so-called "explosive paradox" in the words of Charles Fairbanks. In that part of the world the inertia of revolutionary behavior is predominant even after the revolutionists came to power, leading to the division of society into friends and enemies, to the relapse of authoritarianism and violence. Maybe the first sign of reconciliation in Georgia was at the Orthodox Christmas celebrations on January 7th when Messrs. Saakashvili and his main opponent in election Gachechiladze shook hands in Tbilisi's Sameba Cathedral².

¹ Moscow, Interfax, January 13, 2008

² WSJ, 01.08.08

Second, during last four years of Rose Revolution Georgia undoubtedly changed. The capital Tbilisi and even the most remote locations are illuminated, which is a novelty in Georgia's almost two decades of transition. Every thing that could be liberalized and privatized was. In spite of the Russian embargo on import of famous Georgian wines and agricultural products and double increase of Russia's prices for natural gas and other energy recourses, Georgia's economy is booming with a robust almost two digits increase in GDP and foreign investment³. Georgia improved tremendously its position in the list of business friendly countries: from 112 in 2005 to 32 in the 2008 Index of Economic Freedom⁴.

Nevertheless more then one quarter of population (1.2 million) live below the poverty line, 300,000 from 4.4 million are unemployed, inflation reached 12% and social issues are often ignored by the government, turning into a boomerang⁵. Along with the lack of transparency, persistent cronyism, corruption and violation of property rights this led to increased differentiation and marginalization in Georgian society, anti-government protests and demonstrations. Obviously, the reputation of the Rose Revolution leaders was damaged and it takes time to recover it.

Third, recent presidential elections overshadow to some degree one of the most acute and sensitive problem of Georgia's statehood, that of breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The population in these secessionist territories was not allowed to vote. Their leaders adopted wait-and-see policy, watching and waiting not so what's happening in Georgia's capital Tbilisi, as in Kosovo's Pristina. Meanwhile unsolved status of these regions represents a serious threat for Georgia's territorial integrity and regional stability, and jeopardizes its aspirations for NATO membership at forthcoming April, 2008, session in Bucharest. The de-facto independence of these regions could be turn into de-jure independence by their Russia's recognition just right after Kosovo will declare its independence. As Russian President Vladimir Putin mentioned last summer: "It is very difficult to explain to the small people of the north Caucasus why, in one part of Europe, some people are given this right [to be independent] while here in Caucasus they have no such right"⁶.

I would like to mention just one aspect of this problem that I elaborated in details in my recently finished manuscript on "Frozen and Forgotten Conflicts in the Post-Soviet States: Genesis, Political Economy and Prospects for Solution (Lessons from Moldova)": Russian factor. Inflammatory anti-Russian rhetoric of Georgian leaders during election campaign, suspicious of Russian support of a new coup and in interference in Georgian internal affairs, in my opinion, were not very productive. In my manuscript I stressed that "Russia is not, and never was, just impartial, neutral observer. Russia is an internal, although an impertinent factor of these conflicts. Only the policy of inclusion of Russia

³ Russia bought almost 90% of Georgia's products, Georgia: Sliding towards authoritarianism? International Crisis Group, Europe Report N 189, 19 December 2007

⁴ The real key to Development, by Mary Anastasia O'Grady, WSJ, 01.15.08

⁵ WSJ, 01.04.08; 01.15.08

⁶ Financial Times, January 3, 2008. Breakaway territories watch and wait. By Stefan Wagstyl

with all respective responsibilities can lead to the solution, keeping Russia restrained by international agreements”. Some changes in Georgian leader position were observed after election in this respect that inspires a cautious optimism regarding the prospects for conflict resolution.

Fourth, last, but not least, Presidential Elections put in evidence the fact: Georgia entered into a new phase in its stony road of democratic revival. “The revolution, as Mathew Bryza, the U.S. Deputy Assistance Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs emphasized recently, is over. It is time for the rule of law rather than the rule of street”⁷. It is time to built bridges and to engage all parties, including the opposition, in constructive dialog how to rebuild democratic institutions, how to re-make “Georgia without poverty”, how to reunify the country through genuine dialog with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, how to succeed in Euro-Atlantic integration for which voted more than two third of population. To find right answers and solutions to these challenges is important not only for Georgia, but for the region as a whole, for my native country, Moldova is important for the U.S., EU and NATO and all interested countries and international organizations.

⁷ RFL/RL, January 11, 2008. Georgia: With New Political Landscape, Can Stability Prevail? By Brian Whitmore